

PISHKUN, WILLOW CREEK, BENTON LAKE  
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES  
Narrative Report  
January 1 - April 31, 1953

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I. General.

A. Weather Conditions.

As has been stated in previous narratives there is no weather station at any of these areas; however, there is a station at Choteau and since all three areas are fairly close to Choteau that weather station's data is used. The following chart gives the weather data as recorded at Choteau and forwarded to this office.

<u>Month:</u>	<u>Precipitation:</u>	<u>Max. Temp.:</u>	<u>Min. Temp.:</u>
January	.30	54	-12
February	1.00	58	1
March	.60	66	-13
April	1.49	66	4
Total	3.49 extremes	66	-13

B. Water Conditions:

The following tables show the monthly gauge readings at Pishkun and Willow Creek for the period during past five years.

PISHKUN

	<u>Crest of Spillway 4374</u>		<u>Bottom of outlet 4342</u>		
<u>End of:</u>	<u>1953</u>	<u>1952</u>	<u>1951</u>	<u>1950</u>	<u>1949</u>
January	4361.1	4365.4	4361.9	4362.0	4359.8
February	4360.9	4365.2	4361.8	4361.8	4359.6
March	4360.7	4365.0	4361.8	4361.7	4359.4
April	4362.6	4365.3	4361.9	4366.1	4366.7

WILLOW CREEK

	<u>Crest of Spillway 4142</u>		<u>Bottom of outlet 4080</u>		
<u>End of:</u>	<u>1953</u>	<u>1952</u>	<u>1951</u>	<u>1950</u>	<u>1949</u>
January	4132.7	4135.4	4135.4	4106.9	4131.1
February	4132.9	4136.0	4135.9	4108.7	4131.5
March	4134.0	4137.1	4137.5	4110.9	4132.5
April	4139.1	4138.1	4138.3	4115.9	4133.5

## BENTON LAKE

Benton Lake has no gauge stations as there is no stable water supply. The only water in the old lake bed at the present time is in the old creek channel. This water is the result of overflow from the windmill pump on the northeast side of the refuge. In general the entire area is exceedingly dry with the exception of approximately two miles of the previously mentioned channel.

### II. Wildlife.

#### A. Migratory Birds.

##### 1. Populations and Behavior.

Two visits were made to these areas during the period. One visit was made by Refuge Management Biologist Watson E. Beed, and one visit was made by the refuge manager.

The only birds observed at Fishkum on either trip were a few gulls near the headquarters area. Mr. Faye Covey from the State Game and Fish Department reported seeing approximately 2000 Mallards and Pintails the middle of April.

On March 14 during Mr. Beed's visit to Willow Creek he made a census of the waterfowl. The following is the result of his observation. Whistling Swan 1, Canada Geese 14, Mallard 1000, Pintail 2500, Goldeneye 100, and 50 American Mergansers. At the time of Mr. Beed's observation most of Willow Creek reservoir was frozen over. The only open water was to be found on the West side where the creek enters the reservoir. On April 3 a similar survey was made by the refuge manager. At this time the reservoir was entirely free of ice. Following is number of waterfowl observed. Canada Geese 2 (nesting on island of large pothole on East Side), Mallard 75, Pintail 30, Goldeneye 50, and 2 Loon. The one pair of Canada Geese was the only nesting waterfowl observed by the refuge manager on Willow Creek refuge.

On April 2 The refuge manager made an inspection tour of Benton Lake refuge. Approximately 1000 Mallards and Pintails were observed to be using that part of the old channel which had water in it. Approximately 50 Mallards were found to be using the water hole on the South side of the refuge.

##### 2. Food and Cover.

Both food and cover is very limited for waterfowl on Fishkum and Willow Creek. Ample food and cover present on Benton Lake refuge.

#### B. Upland Game Birds.

##### 1. Populations and Behavior.

Sharp-tailed Grouse, Hungarian Partridge, and Ring-necked Pheasants are present on all three refuges in undetermined numbers.

## 2. Food and Cover.

Food and Cover is very scarce on Pishkun and Willow Creek; however, Benton Lake has ample food and cover. The contrast in food and cover between these areas is a good example of controlled grazing over improper grazing methods.

## C. Big Game Animals.

No big game animals have been observed or reported on Pishkun or Willow Creek. Benton Lake refuge supports a small population of both Antelope and Mule deer. These are kept at a minimum by illegal hunting.

## D. Fur Animals, Predators, and Rodents.

White-tailed jack rabbits and Richardson's ground squirrels are very common on all three areas.

Badgers are common on Benton Lake and their holes are very much in evidence along the Northeast side of the refuge.

## E. Predaceous Birds, including Crows and Magpies.

Crows and Magpies are present in limited numbers on all three areas but present no control problem as yet.

## F. Fish.

The presence of both Loons and Mergansers would tend to indicate the presence of fish in both Pishkun and Willow Creek reservoirs. No reports of fishing success at either refuge has been received by the refuge manager during the period.

## III. Refuge Development Maintenance.

None during period.

## IV. Economic Use of Refuge.

No economic use was made of Pishkun or Willow Creek during the period. Following is a list of permits issued for Benton Lake Refuge.

Permittee	Acreage Utilized	Farming Period of Use	Rate
O.H. Olson	40	1/1/53 to 12/31/53	.50/Ac.

V. Field Investigation and Applied Research.

Mr. Watson E. Beed is at present engaged in a range survey to determine the carrying capacity for Pishkun and Willow Creek refuges. This survey is still in its infant stage, and a more complete progress report will be made at a future date.

VI. Other Items of Interest.

One item which deserves special mention at this time is the passage of an enabling act by the State Legislature authorizing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to purchase and acquire title to lands through which a water right - of - way would have to pass to furnish an adequate water supply to Benton Lake. If adequate water rights, and of course that evil word money, can be obtained an excellent waterfowl refuge will result.

Respectfully submitted

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Grover F. Elgan  
Refuge Manager

Completed May 8, 1953

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
John E. Schwartz  
Superintendent

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Regional Director  
Fish and Wildlife Service  
Region One, Portland, Ore.